DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 345 347 EA 023 933

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TITLE Parent-Teacher Action Research in the League of Schools Reaching Out.
INSTITUTION Institute for Responsive Education, Boston, Mass.
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 38p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20-24, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Action Research; *Cooperative Planning; Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; School Community Relationship; Shared Resources and Services

ABSTRACT

Outcomes of a parent/teacher action research project, the League of Schools Reaching Out, are described in this paper. The League is a group of nine schools working with the Institute for Responsive Education and the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning as a resource exchange network. Project goals are to: investigate the effects of family/community involvement strategies on student achievement, model new family/school/community relationships, provide a reflective component, and examine the effect of policy on school change projects. Impressions of the dynamics of parent/teacher action research indicate that the following are crucial to success: active principal participation; the facilitator as a bridge between the action-reflection gap; flexible multifaceted strategies and common data collection methods; and focus on student achievement and individual school effort. Appendices include parent and teacher questionnaires, a school effectiveness and climate survey, and a list of projects and research questions for the action research teams. (5 references) (LMI)

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Parent-Teacher Action Research in the League of Schools Reaching Out

by Owen Heleen and Jean H. Krasnow

The professional literature is full of advice on parent and community involvement. Schools should think in terms of families instead of just parents, they should become more "family-friendly," they should adopt a non-deficit approach to working with families, parent involvement is more than just bake-sales, parent involvement contributes to student achievement. Sometimes the advice is more concrete: schools should establish family centers, teachers should visit families at home, schools should base parent involvement programming on a needs assessment that give families a chance to define the activities in which they might participate.

How do we know if this advice is sound? How do we know if and how these strategies really work? How do we know what effects what strategies have on family involvement, school culture, climate and, of course, student success?

Those are the core questions for a group of nine schools working with staff at the Institute for Responsive Education and the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning

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in a parent-teacher action research project. The project is designed to both provide for practical, action-oriented reflection in the schools and to produce rigorous research results from real-life settings.

Schools Reaching Out

This focus grew out of a project of the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE), a Boston-based non-profit organization. Schools Reaching Out was an attempt to demonstrate that urban public schools can fundamentally change their relationship with low-income parents and their communities, and in so doing, move closer to the goal of academic and social success for all children. The project began in September 1988 as two schools -- the David A. Ellis School in the Roxbury section of Boston and P.S. 111, the Ochs School in New York City -- agreed to collaborate with IRE as "laboratory schools" trying out strategies to build new relationships with parents and the community. Schools Reaching Out was designed to interweave research and practice. While the laboratory schools worked, aided by IRE staff, to refine new strategies, a separate team of researchers investigated questions of what worked and why. Three strategies worked particularly well (Heleen, 1990; Davies, 1990).

Parent Centers

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot writes: "The presence of parents can

transform the culture of a school." She is right. In Schools Reaching Out, parent centers were low-cost success stories. Teachers and parents reported that "the school is a different place" because the Center existed and made possible a substantial, continuing, positive physical presence of family members in the school.

This presence included the paid parent coordinators and their younger children and relatives, unpaid volunteers, parent visitors dropping in for coffee and a chat, and parents in the ESL and GED classes sponsored by the Center. Parents reported feeling more positive about the school and about being involved in their child's education when they have a welcoming "place of their own" in the school building. In addition, they were a welcomed extra set of hands, doing a lot of helpful things for the schools including arranging for Thanksgiving dinners and volunteering in classes.

Home Visitors

At the Ellis School, Schools Reaching Out achieved a small-scale success with a home visitor program which reached about 75 families who had little other connection with the school and who said they would welcome such visitors. The home visitor program was based on the work of Moncrieff Cochran and the Family Matters program at Cornell University. The approach stresses a non-deficit view of families, building on family strengths, family

empowerment, and helping participants build informal neighborhood networks. This element of the school's outreach program stressed three kinds of services to families: providing information about school programs, requirements, events, and opportunities, modelling positive approaches to working with children to help their social and cognitive development; and offering and arranging referrals to health and social service agencies.

Teacher Action Research

From the outset, the project was committed to engaging teachers as key links in any home-school partnership. In each of the two pilot schools, a four person teacher action research team was formed by a staff facilitator, (Jean Krasnow, one of the authors of this paper) on the basis of an announcement of the plan and applications from interested teachers. The teacher participants were paid a nominal stipend of $600. They met two or three times a month, usually after school hours with the facilitator. The teams designed a survey, interviewed their colleagues in the school, and then implemented a program of mini-grants to encourage other teachers to reach out to families in a variety of activities designed to enhance children's learning.

These teacher teams proved to be attractive to the participants. They offered time and a structure for reflection on ideas and for talking with colleagues about educational issues, both big ideas and smaller classroom concerns (Krasnow, 1990). They provided an

opportunity to move from immediate day-to-day concerns to a consideration of changing long-term organizational norms. Still, we wondered how we might involve parents in these teams from the first.

Current Work

Interested in continuing its learning about these successful features of the program and in developing newer, more effective ideas or combinations of strategies, IRE sought support for a three-year plan of work with a national network of schools. This network, the League of Schools Reaching Out, is now 69 schools in 23 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Interested in how the learnings of Schools Reaching Out apply in different kinds of settings, the League now includes rural, suburban private, and parochial schools.

The League is organized as a resource exchange network (Sarason and Lorentz, 1979). Schools were selected for membership on the basis of applications. The requirements of building a network were what defined the criteria for membership -- to be part of a resource exchange network working on the barter principle, schools must have something to "give" -- something they are expert in -- and some desire to receive -- some ambition to do more. With its focus of achieving academic success for all children through family-school-community partnerships, IRE also sought schools that represented new ideas -- the League includes

representatives from Henry Levin's Accelerated Schools network, James Comer's School Development Project, and Missouri's Parents as Teachers program -- but not "superstar" schools who "have all the answers."

The League has also been organized into "clusters" -- either a number of schools geographically close to one another or schools that are working on related ideas. The League includes geographic clusters in the greater Boston area, San Diego, St. Louis, New York, and Cleveland and groups of schools that are working on parent centers, home visiting programs, action research, and community mentoring. The group working on parent-teacher action research is the focus of this paper.

One of the features of IRE's proposals to the foundations that funded the League (the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Plan for Social Excellence, Boston Globe Foundation, Leon Lowenstein Foundation, and Aaron Diamond Foundation) was that all of the funding would not "stick on" IRE. IRE would share the funding with participating schools in order to seed creative and promising new projects.

With that in mind, in the spring of 1991, IRE disseminated a request for proposals from League schools for project ideas that might build new kinds of relationships between families, schools,

and community members that would lead toward "success for all children." These ideas might be based on the successful strategies of the Schools Reaching Out project or might be something different. IRE originally planned to award four projects a total of $61,400 per year for each of three years. After reviewing 25 school proposals, IRE awarded grants ranging from $21,400 per year to $2,500 per year to seven projects working with nine schools. IRE's grant funds also support facilitators for each project. These individuals work eight days a month, approximately half of them on site in the schools.

They vary in background and experience. One has extensive experience in action research; most do not. The projects are:

"Sherman Outreach Project"

Matthew Sherman Elementary School grades (K-6), San Diego, California
Cecilia Estrada, Principal
Rene Nunez, Facilitator

"Parents, Teachers and Students United in Pursuit of Excellence"

Samuel Gompers Fine Arts Option School grades (4-8), Chicago, Illinois
Blondean Davis, Principal
Elizabeth J. Allen, Facilitator

"Peaceful Warriors" Cluster Parent Outreach Effort

Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School grades (6-8), Boston, Massachusetts
Steven Leonard, Principal
Jacqueline Burnett, Parent Coordinator
Rosario Gomez-Sanford, Facilitator

"Empowering Families to Help Children Succeed"

Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School grades (PreK-5), Boston, Massachusetts
William Henderson, Principal
Cheryl Timmons, Parent
Ilene Carver, Facilitator

"Partnership for School Success Program -- Structured Focus Groups"

Anwatin and Northeast Middle Schools grades (6-8), Minneapolis, Minnesota
Dawn Mennes, Principal, Anwatin
Lawrence Lucio, Principal Northeast
Sandy Christenson, Program Director, University of Minnesota
Shui Fong Lam, Facilitator

"Language Learning -- Boxes for Babes"

Early Education Program (Birth-3 years) - Ferguson-Florissant Schools, Florissant, Missouri
Marion Wilson, Director
Carol Klass, Facilitator

"Excellent Beginnings"

Fairfield Court Elementary School grades (K-5), Richmond, Virginia
Carolyn Spurlock, Principal
Virgie Binford, Facilitator

"Parents as Educational Partners"

Atenville Elementary School grades (K-6), Harts, West Virginia
Darlene Dalton, Principal
Stan Maynard, Facilitator

The Center on Families and Its Research

Just as the League of Schools Reaching Out was getting underway, IRE began work with a consortium of five institutions of higher education (Boston University, the Johns Hopkins University, the

University of Illinois, Wheelock College, and Yale University) in a research and development center funded by the U.S. Department of Education in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The mission of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning is to conduct research, evaluations, policy analyses, and dissemination projects in order to produce new and useful knowledge about how families, schools, and communities influence student motivation, learning, and development. The action research project reported on here is one of the Center's 17 different projects. Our intent in this project is to work with the action research teams in the nine schools to get a realistic school-level look at how policies and school context intentionally or unintentionally encourage or inhibit the formation and maintenance of family-school-community partnerships.

Data Gathering, Facilitation, and Support Strategies

The parent-teacher action research in this project has multiple goals: to investigate the effects of the change on student achievement, to model the kinds of interaction and relationship-building involved in any effort to build new family-school-community relationships, to provide the reflective component essential to the effective implementation of a school change project, and to document both for the school and for our Center on Families research project how policies either facilitate or get in the way of such efforts. The participating schools too

represent a wide range of settings all across the country.

With such diversity, the project's data gathering, facilitation, and support have been diverse as well. Working with IRE and Center on Families staff in a planning conference in late October, the action research teams agreed on the following outline guiding the projects' data gathering efforts:

Part I Gathering Information on the Environment of the Project

A. School (discipline, etc.)
B. Parent and Community Involvement
C. Community Portrait
D. Policy Setting

Part II Common Survey Instruments

A. Parent and Teacher Attitude Survey
B. School Climate Survey
C. Student Self Esteem Survey

Part III Focusing on One Question

A. Choose a Question to Study
B. Design a Research Plan
C. Collect the Data
D. Analyze and Interpret Information Gathered
E. Write Up Your Findings and Recommendations

The action research teams in each school are currently working on four "challenges," gathering information on the "context" of their projects. They are gathering data on:

* What is the school like now? Gathering formal data such as student achievement scores, attendance and disciplinary records, demographic information, budgets, facilities and informal data

such as mission and goal statements, handbooks, speeches, letters to parents, school traditions, etc.

* What were the parent and community involvement projects in place in your school? How did these projects begin? How were they funded? Who participated? Are any activities the results of legislative mandates?

* What is the community setting of the school? This question looks to the larger social, economic, and political environment of the school -- to the community.

* What are the policies which influence the partnership program at the school (district policies, state regulations and legislation and federal regulations and legislation -- Chapter 1, etc.).

All of our participating schools agreed that they would like to have some way to measure the impact of their projects. To develop baseline data, all of the action research teams have agreed to use common survey instruments developed by Sandra Christenson and her colleagues at the University of Minnesota. Examples of these instruments are included in Appendix A. The size of the sample each action research team is pursuing varies from every fifth family at Gompers Fine Arts Option School in Chicago to all parents in the cluster at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School in Boston to all parents of kindergartners and first graders at the Fairfield Court Elementary School in Richmond, Virginia.

The third element of our outline of the elements of a parent-teacher action research project is where most of our school teams

are now. Most of our teams have worked hard to define a question to guide their work. These questions range from a look at the impact of a home visitor program on student achievement at the O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston to the impact of their male mentoring program on classroom dynamics at Gompers in Chicago to the effect of home visits on videotaped parent behavior in the Early Education Program in Ferguson-Florissant School District in St. Louis County, Missouri. Other schools are still working to identify a single workable question (see chart in Appendix B).

With all this hard work ahead of our parent-teacher action research teams, we have developed a sometimes-complicated plan for supporting and facilitating their work. One of the co-authors of this paper, Jean Krasnow, serves as the "coach" for all projects and will visit all of the sites twice this year. Each site has been provided with a facilitator whose salary is paid by IRE grant funds. These facilitators are, for the most part, individuals from outside the school-community so as to be a source of new ideas and ways of working. Each facilitator works eight days a month on the project, four of them on site in the school facilitating meetings of the team and four working to document the process. Finally, each site team has been assigned a contact on the IRE/Center on Families staff. As information is gathered and questions come up, these staffers are available by calling the League's 800 number.

We expect that our parent-teacher action research teams will produce their first tentative results later this spring. What we have in the way of results now is a set of impressions about how parent-teacher action research teams seem to work.

Impressions on the Dynamics of Parent-Teacher Action Research

While these impressions are very tentative, we think they speak to the interaction between the complex, hierarchical structure of schools and the alternative form offered in the parent-teacher action research teams.

Impression #1. While we initially thought the principal's blessing was sufficient, we have discovered that his or her active participation is critical. While this support can take many forms, we are seeing greater success in those teams where the principal is a hands-on member of the action research team. We believe this has to do with modelling inclusiveness. Perhaps as the program goes on, the team will move forward on its own. More than just a blessing, effective functioning requires the principal's help with resources, assistance with communication, the parcelling out of time, and presiding over the creation of new institutional arrangements. Also, our approach seems currently to be working less well in our middle schools. Perhaps this can be attributed to the more hierarchical, departmentalized structure of secondary schools. Alternatively, the difference might also be attributed to a clearer vision of family

involvement at the elementary school level than in secondary schools.

Impression #2. In many ways, the progress of this project so far has made us more aware of the obvious -- the fast-paced, chaotic, reactive nature of most schools. In the beginning, we heard, "We can't do research, we're running a school." But, in many ways, the process we were recommending sought the opposite -- to reverse the order of the schools' usual "do, stop, think" modus operandi. In projects like ours, the facilitator is in a crucial role to bridge this action-reflection gap. But first, the facilitator must be made comfortable with a process that must in many ways "go slow" within a school that is, as most are, designed to "go fast." Compounding this difficulty is the fact that facilitators all have different levels of facilitative skill and orientations. These are not the kinds of projects where one "hits the ground running." Some facilitators have taken some time to orient themselves within their projects. One facilitator told us repeatedly that she was "not a researcher" but a community organizer and activist told us recently that she was "totally converted" to the action research process because writing in her journal on the project gets her thinking "about where new ideas come from."

At this point in the project it seems to us that the facilitators should be "outsiders," separate from the school culture because

their school colleagues require their help in bridging this action-research split. Successful facilitators have strong relational skills, are non-judgmental, inclusive, know how to build trust, and build on the strengths they find in people and programs.

Impression #3. Just as important but little recognized is the need for flexible multi-faceted strategies for third-party facilitation. IRE and Center on families staff must shift back and forth between "direction" and facilitation. On the direction side of the ledger, staff gather monthly reports from facilitators, check in with projects at least monthly over the phone, work to implement the common survey instruments so as to have baseline data, and encourage the projects to gather data on the policy and background school contexts of the project even when the worth of this component is not immediately apparent to the individual project. Facilitative tasks include listening; joint problem solving; working to build on project interests and local realities; flexible implementation of the data collection strategies; and expressing supportive, accepting encouragement. We have sought to build a base of common knowledge throughout the project so as not to have to re-invent the wheel in every conversation and have found that a newsletter for project participants and a short video on parent-teacher action research are helpful strategies in this direction. Encouraging communication amongst the project's eight facilitators has also

been helpful. We have also found any number of ways to allow for flexibility without compromising the integrity of the project. Two projects have rewritten their proposals as a first task. We have also found it necessary to rebudget some items to allow for the transcription of meeting tapes from some projects.

Impression #4. We have been struck with the variety of different kinds of data gathering strategies our projects have adopted. These strategies range from structured interviews with parents, students, and community mentors; to parents writing in journals; to analysis of taped conversations with home visitors; to coding videotaped parent-child interactions. We are struck by the fact that the project would be nowhere if it did not allow for this variety of different kinds of discourse, but often worry about providing enough commonalities in the data across projects. Our strategies to address this problem include the common survey instruments and clustering projects with similar strategies.

Impression #5. Our next set of impressions have to do with the long road to affecting student achievement. Many of our projects strategies have to do with increasing the level of family or community involvement in the school in order to increase the level of achievement. The exact mechanism for achieving that increase is in many cases unclear. It seems likely that most projects will involve some change in how teachers think and work.

Parents and teachers now seem to be working together remarkably well in the parent-teacher action research teams. Will the same hold true when the teams begin to move into "teacher areas?" It seems overwhelmingly likely that discussion will move in this direction as we continually stress a focus on student success. It seems to us an important challenge for these projects to keep critical discussion going when the topic turns to issues of pedagogy and classroom discipline. Otherwise, we may have projects where family and community involvement simply leads to increased involvement -- a noble goal, but not the one we're aiming at. Will school change won in these involvement project facilitate or serve as the catalyst for some broader pattern of school change?

Impression #6. Our final set of impressions has to do with the usefulness of parent-teacher action research in overcoming the barriers to reflection and structured inquiry in schools. All of these projects operate a counter to school tradition where it is the outsiders who come in to do the research. It is rare to be asked to speak and even rarer to be asked to formulate questions. With a substantial investment of time on the phone and through the mail and a talented support staff facilitating, almost all of our projects have now left the hesitation to develop a question they are interested in and strategies that will work behind. Together we have overcome that nagging feeling that the real researchers will parachute in to tell everyone what to do.

In our project, bottom-up and top-down currents have each had their moment and neither seems to be dominating. Overcoming these currents is a strong desire on the part of all of these schools to be part of an effort larger than their individual school, an effort that leads to some larger significance. The validation of being part of a national effort, exchanging insights with colleagues from different parts of the countries from schools in very different settings has been a strong unifying force.

So far, parent-teacher action research seems on course and in a year we hope to have in hand a substantial collection of learnings about how and why specific family-community involvement strategies work to promote student achievement.

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Home-School Partnership Survey

Partnership for School Success Program (1991)

SAMPLE

Parent Form B

School: ❑ ~~Anwatin~~ Group: ❑ 1
❑ Northeast ❑ 2
❑ ~~Folwell~~ ❑ 3

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

~~Guardian~~: ❑ Mother (❑ Step)
Relation to student ❑ Father (❑ Step)
❑ Grandmother ❑ Others _____

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I honestly state concerns about my child's performance to school personnel.	1	2	3	4
2. School personnel and I have different educational goals for my child.	1	2	3	4
3. School personnel and I welcome ideas and suggestions from each other about ways to improve my child's school performance.	1	2	3	4
4. It is difficult to find opportunities for me and school personnel to communicate about my child.	1	2	3	4
5. I do a good job of helping my child with learning activities at home.	1	2	3	4
6. There are opportunities for me and school personnel to make decisions together about my child's education.	1	2	3	4
7. I am not sure school personnel at my child's school have the skills and knowledge to teach my child.	1	2	3	4
8 I am frequently involved in school activities, such as open house or college night.	1	2	3	4
9. I need to know or learn specific ways to help my child at home.	1	2	3	4
10. I know what my child's teachers want me to do to help my child learn.	1	2	3	4
11. I make sure my child has good nutrition, proper clothing, and enough sleep.	1	2	3	4
12. I trust school personnel to provide the best learning environment for my child.	1	2	3	4
13. I question whether school personnel at my child's school are supportive of me and my child.	1	2	3	4
14. When my child is having problems in school, school personnel				
◆ and I determine one goal we both want to work toward.	1	2	3	4
◆ and I develop a plan for changing the problems.	1	2	3	4
◆ listen to me and try to understand my needs.	1	2	3	4

(S. Christenson, Ph.D. & S. F. Lam, Educational Psychology, University of Minnesota)

Partnership for School Success Program (1991)

Parent Form B

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15. I am confident that the teachers of my child				
◆ are doing a good job in teaching my child academic skills	1	2	3	4
◆ respect me as a competent parent	1	2	3	4
◆ care about my child	1	2	3	4
◆ are doing a good job in helping my child resolve conflicts with peers	1	2	3	4
◆ are doing a good job keeping me well informed of my child's progress	1	2	3	4
◆ are doing a good job in encouraging my child's sense of self-esteem	1	2	3	4
◆ are doing a good job in encouraging my child to have positive attitude toward learning	1	2	3	4
◆ are doing a good job in encouraging my participation in my child's education	1	2	3	4
◆ are doing a good job in disciplining my child	1	2	3	4
◆ are teaching my child to be a good citizen	1	2	3	4
◆ are doing a good job in providing my child with relevant learning experience	1	2	3	4

	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Almost Never
16. In this school year how often has someone from school				
◆ inform you (by phone or note) the progress of your child?	1	2	3	4
◆ contacted you regarding the problems of your child?	1	2	3	4
◆ contacted you to tell you something positive about your child?	1	2	3	4
17. In this school year, how often have you				
◆ contacted your child's teacher to check on your child's progress?	1	2	3	4
◆ contacted school personnel regarding the problems of your child?	1	2	3	4
◆ contacted your child's teachers for positive reasons?	1	2	3	4

	More than 7	3-6 times	1-2 times	Never
18. In a typical week, how many times do you				
◆ ask your child about school?	1	2	3	4
◆ help your child with homework?	1	2	3	4
19. How many times have you done the following this school year:				
◆ attended a parent meeting (e.g. PTO, parent advocacy)	1	2	3	4
◆ attended a parent-teacher conference	1	2	3	4
◆ attended school activities (e.g.open house)	1	2	3	4
◆ others _____	1	2	3	4

Parent Form B

20. When trying to resolve a school concern for your child, how comfortable are you discussing the following with school personnel?

	Very Comfortable	Comfortable	Uncomfortable	Very Uncomfortable
◆ your expectations for your child	1	2	3	4
◆ your stress and concerns	1	2	3	4
◆ your discipline approach	1	2	3	4
◆ your attitude toward learning	1	2	3	4
◆ your child's home life (e.g. sibling or parent-child relationship)	1	2	3	4

21. When trying to resolve a school conern for your child, how important it is for school personnel to share the following information with you?

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Least Important
◆ their expectations for your child	1	2	3	4
◆ their stress and concern	1	2	3	4
◆ school rules and discipline policies	1	2	3	4
◆ curriculum and teaching activities	1	2	3	4
◆ school performance and adjustment of your child	1	2	3	4

22. In your experience, name two things the teachers of your child do that have had a positive influence on your child's performance in school.

_____

_____

23. In your experience, name two things you do that have had a positive influence on your child's performance in school.

_____

_____

USE OF OUT OF SCHOOL TIME SAMPLE

Partnership for School Success (1991)

School: ☐ Anwatin ☐ Northeast Group: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3

Student Name: _____

ID: _____

Relation to student: ☐ Mother ☐ Father ☐ Aunt ☐ Uncle ☐ Grandmother ☐ Other _____

Parent/Guardian Form

Directions: Please indicate the school, student name, student ID # (if known), and respondents relation to the student. After explaining your role as the Family Focus Teacher, read the following questions to the parent/guardian and record their answers. Remind themthat their answers will be kept confidential.

1. What kind of activities do you want your child to be involved in after school?
   - ☐ academic (e.g., school work)
   - ☐ leisure/recreation (e.g., going to the park, Y, community centers)
   - ☐ life skills (e.g., learning how to cook, look for a job, money management)
   - ☐ no preference
   - ☐ other _____

2. What kinds of things is she/he doing now with free time?

   _____

3. How do you supervise and monitor your child's use of out of school time?

   _____

	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Almost Always
4. How often do the following things keep you from being involved at school?				
• transportation to the school	1	2	3	4
• work	1	2	3	4
• time schedule	1	2	3	4
• child care	1	2	3	4
• feel uncomfortable at school	1	2	3	4
• negative experiences with this or another school in the past	1	2	3	4
• not interested	1	2	3	4
• no one asked me	1	2	3	4
• other reasons (specify) _____	1	2	3	4
5. How often do the following things keep you from being involved with your child's schoolwork at home?				
• house chores	1	2	3	4
• younger children	1	2	3	4
• don't know how	1	2	3	4
• work	1	2	3	4
• child's resistance	1	2	3	4
• hardship the family is facing	1	2	3	4
• too many other things to do	1	2	3	4
• somebody else helps her/him	1	2	3	4
6. Based on your experience, is (school name) a place where you can comfortably work through concerns or problems regarding your child?	1	2	3	4
7. Do you feel welcome at school?	1	2	3	4

Home-School Parntership

Partnership for School Success Program (1991)

Teacher Form

Please complete the following information.
Individual responses will be kept confidential.
Information will be reported in aggregate only.

Name: _____

Team Name (if applicable): _____

School:

- ☐ Anwatin
- ☐ Folwell
- ☐ Northeast

Directions:

The purpose of this survey is to help us learn about how teachers in this school view the home-school partnership. Your professional opinions and attitudes are invaluable for helping form plans about ways that schools and parents can best help all children succeed in education.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement, by circling the one choice for each item that best represents your opinion or experience ***in this school community***.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Parents want to be involved in school activities.	1	2	3	4
2.	Parents and teachers honestly state concerns about students' performance.	1	2	3	4
3.	It is difficult to find opportunities for parents and teachers to communicate about students.	1	2	3	4
4.	Students learn most when parents and teachers share and listen to each other's concerns.	1	2	3	4
5.	Parents and teachers respect each other's skills and knowledge about adolescents.	1	2	3	4
6.	Teachers expect too much of parents.	1	2	3	4
7.	Parent feel unwelcome when they visit their child's school.	1	2	3	4
8.	To the best of their ability, parents make sure their children have good nutrition, proper clothing, and enough sleep.	1	2	3	4
9.	It is difficult to find opportunities for teachers and parents to discuss goals an expectations for students.	1	2	3	4
10.	Students learn most when parents and teachers communicate regularly.	1	2	3	4
11.	Parents, teachers and administrators should plan together about school discipline policies.	1	2	3	4
12.	Parents and teachers trust each other to provide the best learning environment for each student.	1	2	3	4
13.	Parents and teachers welcome ideas and suggestions from each other about ways to improve students' school performance.	1	2	3	4
14.	Parents expect too much of teachers.	1	2	3	4
15.	Students learn most when parents and teachers make decisions together about their education.	1	2	3	4
16.	There are opportunities for parents and teachers to make decisions together about students' education.	1	2	3	4
17.	Parents are often too busy to be regularly involved in their child's education.	1	2	3	4
18.	Teachers should encourage parents to get involved in their child's education.	1	2	3	4
19.	Students learn the most when parents and teachers respect each other.	1	2	3	4
20.	Parents should help their child with learning activities at home.	1	2	3	4
21.	There are no opportunities for parents and teachers to share information about students' performance.	1	2	3	4

Home-School Parntership

Partnership for School Success Program (1991)

Teacher Form

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
22.	Parents and teachers should decide together what is taught in school.	1	2	3	4
23.	Students learn the most when parents and teachers have mutually agreed upon goals for their education.	1	2	3	4
24.	Information from school fails to inform parents about school programs and students' progress.	1	2	3	4
25.	Teachers should help parents learn specific ways to help their child at home.	1	2	3	4
26.	Parents and teachers have different educational goals for students.	1	2	3	4
27.	Students learn the most when parents and teachers work together.	1	2	3	4
28.	Teachers have enough work to do without having to try to involve parents.	1	2	3	4
29.	I am confident that the parents of my students:				
	◗ are doing a good job in helping their children learn academic subjects at home	1	2	3	4
	◗ respect me as a competent teacher	1	2	3	4
	◗ care about their children	1	2	3	4
	◗ are doing a good job in teaching their children to follow rules and directions	1	2	3	4
	◗ are doing a good job in helping their children resolve conflicts with peers	1	2	3	4
	◗ are doing a good job in encouraging their children's sense of self-esteem	1	2	3	4
	◗ are doing a good job in encouraging their children to have positive attitude toward learning	1	2	3	4
	◗ are doing a good job in helping their children understand moral and ethical responsibilities	1	2	3	4
	◗ are doing a good job in participating in their children's education	1	2	3	4
	◗ are doing a good job in disciplining their child	1	2	3	4

		Very Important	Important	Less Important	Not Important
30.	How important is it for parents to share the following information with you, as a teacher?				
	◗ cultural beliefs	1	2	3	4
	◗ religious values	1	2	3	4
	◗ birth of sibling or adoption	1	2	3	4
	◗ parents' discipline approach	1	2	3	4
	◗ significant individuals in their children's life	1	2	3	4
	◗ daily routines of the family	1	2	3	4
	◗ parent concerns about adolescent's development	1	2	3	4
	◗ parent expectations for their children in the home	1	2	3	4
	◗ how disagreements are handled	1	2	3	4
	◗ family rules	1	2	3	4
	◗ conflict among siblings	1	2	3	4
	◗ parent-adolescent conflict	1	2	3	4
	◗ excessive work demands	1	2	3	4
	◗ frequent parental absenses	1	2	3	4
	◗ unusual family stress (e.g. medical, economic, death, divorce)	1	2	3	4
	◗ parents' philosophy of education	1	2	3	4
	◗ family attitude toward learning	1	2	3	4
	◗ parent expectations for their children in school	1	2	3	4
	◗ parent availability for homework	1	2	3	4

Teacher Form

		Very Comfortable	Comfortable	Less Comfortable	Not Comfortable
31.	How comfortable are you sharing the following information with parents?				
	◗ mission of the school	1	2	3	4
	◗ curriculum and teaching activities	1	2	3	4
	◗ school discipline and rules	1	2	3	4
	◗ your philosophy of education	1	2	3	4
	◗ your credentials in teaching	1	2	3	4
	◗ your experience in teaching	1	2	3	4
	◗ your expectations for students in school	1	2	3	4
	◗ your teaching style	1	2	3	4
	◗ your cultural beliefs	1	2	3	4
	◗ your personal stress	1	2	3	4
	◗ students' extracurricular activities in school	1	2	3	4
	◗ students' conduct and behavior	1	2	3	4
	◗ students' peer group	1	2	3	4
	◗ social and emotional adaptation of students	1	2	3	4
	◗ ideas on nutrition, health care, or raising children	1	2	3	4
	◗ family services that are available from other agencies	1	2	3	4
	◗ ideas on how to help children with homework at home	1	2	3	4
	◗ ideas on parental discipline	1	2	3	4

		Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Almost Never
32.	In this school year how often have you communicated with parents in the following manner:				
	◗ contacted parents by phone	1	2	3	4
	◗ sent parents a note	1	2	3	4
	◗ told parents how their children are doing in school	1	2	3	4
	◗ sent parents a student behavior form	1	2	3	4
	◗ sent parents a student a suspension form	1	2	3	4
	◗ contacted parents to tell them something positive about their children	1	2	3	4
	◗ visited parents at home	1	2	3	4

33.	In this school year, how often have the parents of your students:				
	◗ called you to check on their children's progress	1	2	3	4
	◗ called the school with a concern	1	2	3	4
	◗ written a note to school staff	1	2	3	4
	◗ contacted you for positive reasons	1	2	3	4
	◗ visited you at school	1	2	3	4

34. In your experience, name two things teachers do that have had a positive influence on children's performce in school.

_____

_____

35. In your experience, name two things parents do that have had a positive influence on children's performance in school.

_____

_____

Partnership of School Success (1991)

SAMPLE

School: ☐ Anwatin ☐ Northeast ☐ Folwelll Group: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3

Name: _____

ID: _____

Directions: Please circle the answer that best describes how you feel.

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. How often does someone in you family:					
• Make sure you do your homework	1	2	3	4	5
• Know how you are doing in school	1	2	3	4	5
• Go to school programs for parents (open houses,dinners, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
• Help you with school work	1	2	3	4	5
• Go to conferences with your teachers/counselors	1	2	3	4	5
• Ask you what you learned in school	1	2	3	4	5

	All	Most	Half	A Few	None
2. How many of your teachers fit the following descriptions					
• Teachers who are interested in your life	1	2	3	4	5
• Teachers who spend extra time with you	1	2	3	4	5
• Teachers who involve you in class	1	2	3	4	5
• Teachers who help you learn	1	2	3	4	5
• Teachers who are interest in your classwork	1	2	3	4	5
• Teachers who answer your questions	1	2	3	4	5
• Teachers who work with your parents	1	2	3	4	5
• Teachers who appreciate student effort	1	2	3	4	5

3. Name 2 things your teachers do that have helped you do well in school.

_____

_____

4. Name 2 things your parents or guardians do that have helped you do well in school.

_____

_____

5. How sure are you that you will graduate from high school?

1 I am **very sure** I **will** graduate
2 I **probably will** graduate
3 I **probably won't** graduate
4 I am **very sure** I **won't** graduate

School Effectiveness and Climate SAMPLE

Partnership for School Success Program (1991)

Please complete the following information. Individual responses will be kept confidential. Information will be reported in aggregate only.

Name: _____

Team Name: _____

School: _____

- ☐ Austin
- ☐ Falwell
- ☐ Northeast

PART A.

Please complete the following information:

I. Your current position(s): _____
(e.g., core teacher, leadership team member, resource staff, administrator)

II. The primary funding source of your position:
- ☐ special education
- ☐ regular education

III. Number of years you have been a fulltime educator:
_____ number of years

VI. Number of years you have been at this school:
number of years
_____

IV. Ethnicity:
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other

V. Gender:
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

PART B. SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

Directions: Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that each of the following statements is currently a characteristic of your school.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	This school has a sense of purpose and clearly defined goals and expectations related to student achievement.	1	2	3	4
2.	School policy and procedures are congruent with adopted school goals.	1	2	3	4
3.	School administrators and staff share in the decision-making process.	1	2	3	4
4.	Teachers show enthusiasm for teaching.	1	2	3	4
5.	Students show enthusiasm for learning.	1	2	3	4
6.	School staff and students show respect for each other.	1	2	3	4
7.	The principal encourages progress toward high goals and expectations.	1	2	3	4
8.	The principal offers ongoing, constructive feedback to teaching staff.	1	2	3	4
9.	The principal is knowledgeable about the process of school improvement and the dynamic structure of the school's organization.	1	2	3	4
10.	Staff input is used to help determine school procedures and practices.	1	2	3	4
11.	Staff at school-site create school improvement programs to meet the school's identified needs and concerns.	1	2	3	4
12.	District-level support is provided to schools to help them manage their school improvement efforts.	1	2	3	4
13.	District staff are aware and knowledgeable of the purpose and benefits of proposed improvements.	1	2	3	4
14.	Teachers provide peer observation and feedback regarding instructional practices.	1	2	3	4

modified from: Minnesota Education Effectiveness Program,
Minnesota Department of Education, St. Paul, MN 55101

School Effectiveness and Climate

Partnership for School Success Program (1991)

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15.	Experimentation with new instructional practices is encouraged.	1	2	3	4
16.	Teachers plan and design instructional materials together.	1	2	3	4
17.	The staff development program is directed toward the school's goals and instructional program.	1	2	3	4
18.	Staff development programs are relevant to current classroom concerns.	1	2	3	4
19.	Textbooks, activities, and curriculum match desired student outcomes.	1	2	3	4
20.	School activities are organized to maximize learning time.	1	2	3	4
21.	Parents understand and support the basic objectives of the school.	1	2	3	4
22.	A wide range of school involvement activities are available to parents.	1	2	3	4
23.	Parents are important to the school's accomplishment of its objectives.	1	2	3	4
24.	A set of student expectations and guidelines for student behavior has been developed.	1	2	3	4
25.	Teachers show students they care about them.	1	2	3	4
26.	School rules are consistently applied by all teachers and staff.	1	2	3	4
27.	Teachers handle inappropriate behavior in a way that maintains dignity of student and positive classroom environment.	1	2	3	4
28.	High expectations and goals are set for all students.	1	2	3	4
29.	All students are treated with respect in a fair and equitable manner.	1	2	3	4
30.	Teachers emphasize creative thinking, reasoning, group decision making, persistence, curiosity, and ingenuity for all students.	1	2	3	4
31.	School organization, instructional strategies and group patterns are flexible and based upon the needs of the students.	1	2	3	4
32.	Cooperative learning strategies are used in the school environment.	1	2	3	4
33.	Instructional plans include the use of several kinds of media, material, technological and human resources.	1	2	3	4
34.	Teachers base instructional decisions upon accurate records which document student performance.	1	2	3	4
43.	Questioning strategies are used to promote critical thinking.	1	2	3	4
44.	Adequate provision is made for student practice.	1	2	3	4
45.	Teachers use oral, written, and other products to assess student progress.	1	2	3	4
46.	Teachers regularly provide prompt feedback on the correctness of in-class and out-of class work.	1	2	3	4

PART C. SCHOOL CLIMATE

Directions: Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that each of the following statements is currently a characteristic of your school.

		Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	In this school even low achieving students are respected.	1	2	3	4
2.	Teachers treat students as persons.	1	2	3	4
3.	Parents are considered by this school as important collaborators	1	2	3	4
4.	While we don't always agree, we can share our concerns with each other openly.	1	2	3	4
5.	Our principal is a good spokesperson before the superintendent and the board for our interests and needs.	1	2	3	4
6.	Students can count on teachers to listen to their side of the story and to be fair.	1	2	3	4
7.	This school makes students enthusiastic about learning.	1	2	3	4
8.	Attendance is good; students stay away only for urgent and good reasons.	1	2	3	4
9.	Parents, teachers, and students would rise to the defense of this school's program if it were challenged.	1	2	3	4
10.	I feel that my ideas are listened to and used in this school.	1	2	3	4
11.	Important decisions are made in this school by a governing council with representation from students, faculty, and administration.	1	2	3	4
12.	While I obviously can't have a vote on every decision that is made in this school that affects me, I do feel that I can have some important input into that decision.	1	2	3	4
13.	The school supports parent growth. Regular opportunities are provided for parents to be involved in learning activities and in examining new ideas.	1	2	3	4
14.	When a problem comes up, this school has procedures for working on it; problems are seen as normal challenges; not as "rocking the boat."	1	2	3	4
15.	Students are encouraged to be creative rather than to conform.	1	2	3	4
16.	Careful effort is made, when new programs are introduced, to adapt them to the particular needs of this community and this school.	1	2	3	4
17.	Required textbooks and curriculum guides support rather than limit creative teaching and learning in our school.	1	2	3	4
18.	Teachers are actively learning, too.	1	2	3	4
19.	This school's program stimulates creative thought and expression.	1	2	3	4
20.	Each student's special abilities (intellectual, artistic, social, or manual) are challenged.	1	2	3	4

nodified from:
E. Howard, B. Howell & E. Brainard (1987). Handbook for Conducting School Climate Improvement Projects, The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (CFK Ltd.), Bloomington, IN 47402

School Effectiveness and Climate

Partnership for School Success Program (1991)

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21.	Teachers use a wide range of teaching materials and media.	1	2	3	4
22.	Many opportunities are provided for learning in individual and small-group settings, as well as in classroom-sized groups.	1	2	3	4
23.	The school program extends to settings beyond the school building for most students.	1	2	3	4
24.	The school's program is appropriate for ethnic and minority groups.	1	2	3	4
25.	Students are given alternative ways of meeting curriculum requirements.	1	2	3	4
26.	Extracurricular activities appeal to each of the various subgroups of students.	1	2	3	4
27.	The school's program encourages students to develop self-discipline and initiative.	1	2	3	4
28.	The needs of a few students for close supervision and high structure are met without making those students feel "put down."	1	2	3	4
29.	The administration is supportive of teachers.	1	2	3	4
30.	The school operates under a set of rules which were worked out with students, teachers, parents, and administration all participating.	1	2	3	4
31.	Rules are few and simple.	1	2	3	4
32.	Discipline (punishment) when given is fair and related to violations of agreed-upon rules.	1	2	3	4
33.	The grading system rewards each student for his effort in relationship to his own ability.	1	2	3	4
34.	Students know the criteria used to evaluate their progress.	1	2	3	4
35.	Teachers are rewarded for exceptionally good teaching.	1	2	3	4
36.	This school has set some goals as a school for this year and I know about them.	1	2	3	4
37.	Community involvement is sought in developing the school's goals.	1	2	3	4
38.	The goals of this school are used to provide direction for programs.	1	2	3	4
39.	In this school people with ideas or values different from the commonly accepted ones get a chance to be heard.	1	2	3	4
40.	There are procedures open to me for going to a higher authority if a decision has been made that seems unfair.	1	2	3	4
41.	This school believes there may be several alternative solutions to most problems.	1	2	3	4
42.	In this school the principal tries to deal with conflict constructively; not just "keep the lid on."	1	2	3	4

modified from:
E. Howard, B. Howell & E. Brainard (1987). Handbook for Conducting School Climate Improvement Projects. The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (CFK Ltd.), Bloomington, IN 47402

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
43.	Parents help to decide about new school programs.	1	2	3	4
44.	Decisions that affect this school are made by the superintendent and the central staff only after opportunity has been provided for discussion and input from the school's principal, staff, and students.	1	2	3	4
45.	The student government makes important decisions.	1	2	3	4
46.	Teachers, students, and parents help to evaluate this school's program.	1	2	3	4
47.	Teachers or students can arrange to deviate from the prescribed program of the school.	1	2	3	4
48.	Teachers are held accountable in this school for providing learning opportunities for each of their students.	1	2	3	4
49.	When one teaching strategy does not seem to be working for a particular student, the teacher tries another; does not blame the student for initial failure.	1	2	3	4
50.	Inservice education programs available to teachers in this building help them keep up-to-date on the best teaching strategies.	1	2	3	4
51.	The school systematically encourages students to help other students with their learning activities.	1	2	3	4
52.	There is sufficient staff in this school to meet the needs of its students.	1	2	3	4
53.	The instructional materials are adequate for our school program.	1	2	3	4
54.	Curriculum materials used in this school give appropriate emphasis and accurate facts regarding ethnic and minority groups, and sex roles.	1	2	3	4
55.	Resources are provided so that students may take advantage of learning opportunities in the community through field trips, work-study arrangements, and the like.	1	2	3	4
56.	Teachers and students are able to get the instructional materials they need at the time they are needed.	1	2	3	4
57.	Budget making for this school provides opportunities for teachers to recommend and make judgments about priorities for resources needed in their program.	1	2	3	4
58.	The support system of this school fosters creative and effective teaching/ learning opportunities rather than hinders them.	1	2	3	4

odified from:
Howard, B. Howell & E. Brainard (1987). Handbook for Conducting School Climate Improvement
rojects. The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (CFK Ltd., Bloomington, IN 47...

APPENDIX B

Projects and Research Questions for the Action Research Teams

SCHOOLS

Patrick O'Hearn
Elementary School
Boston, MA

Project

Parent volunteers make home visits to other parents in the school to encourage their participation in children's learning at home and attendance at school sponsored activities.

Research Question

Will parents who are visited increase their participation in school sponsored events?
How will student behavior and/or achievement change among students whose families were visited?
How will the parents who are visited describe the impact of the visits?
How will the parent volunteer visitors assess their experience?

Matthew Sherman
Elementary School
San Diego, CA

Project

Visits by parents to other parents in the community to encourage their participation in activities at school related to increasing children's motivation and learning.

Research Question

How will home visits impact student achievement and increase parental participation in school?

Samuel Gompers
Fine Arts School
Chicago, IL

Project

African-American male members of the community "mentor" classes in grades 4-8. Activities include speakers, field trips, supportive, encouraging discussions.

Research Questions

What is the impact on students on the mentoring program?
How does the mentoring program facilitate increased parent involvement in the school?
What is the experience of the mentors in the program?
What is the impact of the mentoring program on students' self-esteem and academic achievement.

Atenville Elementary School
Harts, WV

Project

Outreach by parents to other parents to increase participation in school sponsored activities and in children's learning at home.

Research Question

How will parents respond to the visits?
Will personal visits and telephone contact increase parent participation at the school?
Over the two years of the project, will student attendance and achievement improve?

Fairfield Court
Elementary School
Richmond, VA

Project

Paraprofessionals who spend 1/2 time in classrooms visit parents of the children in those classrooms and encourage the use of particular lessons and school-like materials at home.

Research Question

To what extent will the parents receiving the home visits become involved in activities at the school.

Ferguson-Florissant
Early Education
Program
Florissant, MO

Project

New parents in the community are visited by trained parent educators, offered encouragement provided by a specially designed collection of toys and suggestions regarding parent child play and communication.

Research Question

Will the parent and child demonstrate improved communication as recorded on video and coded on a parent/child communication observation scale?

Anwatin and
Northeast
Middle Schools
Minneapolis, MN

Project

Communication and trust between parents and teachers are built and expanded through cluster groups.

Research Questions

How can parent-teacher clusters change and improve parent and student attitudes towards schools?

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Middle School
Boston, MA

Project

Two parents and one full time paid coordinator work with teachers at the school to plan and implement activities to bring parents into the school, meet with teachers, and organize systemwide to advocate for the school's program and staff.

Research Question

What are successful strategies to involve middle school parents in the school?